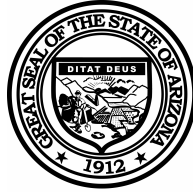# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Introduces Internet Program to Fight Auto Theft

(Phoenix, Ariz. – July 20, 2006) Is there an abandoned or suspicious car in your neighborhood? Thinking of buying a used car and want to make sure it isn't stolen?

Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced a new Internet service that enables citizens to type into their computers a license plate number or Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to find out immediately if a car has been stolen.

Citizens can access the service at www.theftaz.azag.gov. In addition to computers, cell phones that have Internet access can also be used to check a vehicle's status.

"This service can multiply by many thousands the number of eyes looking for stolen cars and help reduce auto theft in Arizona," Goddard said. "Citizens now have an easy way to assist law enforcement. This Internet program quickly determines if a vehicle has been reported stolen, and if it has, directs them to contact the appropriate police agency."

For the past several years, Arizona has ranked among the top five states with the highest number of car thefts in the country. In 2004, the most recent year with complete data, Arizona ranked No. 4 in the nation for the number of vehicle thefts and was second only to Nevada in the vehicle theft rate per 100,000 residents.

A vehicle theft occurs about every 10 minutes in Arizona. The state's highly mobile population and its proximity to the U.S.-Mexico border have contributed significantly to its high theft rate. Sport utility vehicles and large pickup trucks are often targeted for use in drug or human smuggling.

"Through the use of this technology, we welcome the help of citizens in combating the vehicle theft problem in Arizona," said Roger Vanderpool, Director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

The auto theft Web site works like this: Once citizens access the page, they are asked to enter either a vehicle's license plate number or VIN. When they click on "Submit Search," a report will come back within seconds stating whether the car has been reported stolen. No other information about the vehicle, such as the owner's name, is provided.

If the car has been reported stolen, the consumer is directed to the right police agency. Citizens are asked to call the responsible police department and notify them when a stolen vehicle is located. Stolen vehicle data will be updated twice daily in the system. The new Web site can be especially helpful for neighborhood blockwatch groups and security guards.

The auto theft system also stands to benefit Mexican law enforcement agencies. Instead of having to take several steps to identity stolen U.S. vehicles in Mexico, they will be able to learn instantly whether a vehicle has been reported stolen in Arizona.

Arizona becomes only the second state in the country with an Internet service that can be used by citizens to determine if a vehicle has been stolen. Florida has a similar system in operation.

The auto theft page can also be accessed through links on the Web sites of the Attorney General's Office (www.azag.gov), the Department of Public Safety (www.azdps.gov) and the Arizona Auto Theft Authority (www.aata.state.az.us)

"The Arizona Auto Theft Authority is pleased to support and partner with the Arizona Attorney General's Office to promote this Web site as another tool available to Arizona residents to protect themselves from possible consumer fraud when purchasing a used vehicle and as a mechanism for notifying law enforcement of suspicious and/or stolen vehicles," said Enrique Cantu, Director of the Arizona Auto Theft Authority.

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